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JUNIOR FICTION NO. 3 2013

FICTION STANDING ORDER



FEATURED BOOK: SONG FOR A SCARLET RUNNER

For information about our featured book, please visit our website: australianstandingorders.com.au

As I receive submissions from Australian publishers for 2013, I've noticed that there are many more fiction books for older readers this year. So many, in fact, that it's making it difficult to balance our orders with younger fiction as well as older fiction. I'm interested to know how older fiction works for you, so please get in touch via our Customer Service team with your feedback.

Our featured book this month is *Song for a Scarlet Runner* by Julie Hunt. It's a wonderful combination of magic realism, folklore and fantasy adventure. It features the clever concept of stories within a story, a concept the author executes with great skill. There's plenty of humour too. A brilliant read for both boys and girls in Upper Primary.

Runaways is a verse novel from award-winning author Sherryl Clark. This is an easy read, but one packed with important themes: family, belonging, forgiveness, identity and behavioural issues. The beautiful language very quickly draws the reader into the plight of Cassie and Jack. Suitable for Upper Primary and more advanced Mid Primary readers.

Light Horse Boy by Dianne Wolfer is a companion book to *Lighthouse Girl*, which was published a few years ago and won the West Australian Young Readers' Book Awards and was shortlisted for two Premier's Awards. As with the first book, *Light Horse Boy* combines illustrations, text, historical documents and letters, weaving fact with fiction to tell the story of two young men discovering the realities of battle in WW1. Suitable for Mid to Upper Primary.

Nell's Festival of Crisp Winter Glories is the latest book in Glenda Millard's superb *Kingdom of Silk* series. The books in this series have won so many awards that I don't have room to mention them all, but I will say that the books deserve every single one of those awards! Stephen Michael King's illustrations add to the delightful package. The publisher tells me that this is the final book in the series, which makes me want to weep ... a beautiful, tender, sweet finale. Suitable for Mid to Upper Primary.

My Happy Life is a terrific book for Lower to Mid Primary from the clever people at Gecko. The story explores themes of family, friendship, loss and grief. That makes it sound like it's a heavy read, but it's the exact opposite. The main character, Dani, is an optimist and the book explores how the love and support of family can help overcome adversity. It's charming and funny – a lovely read.

Super Finn by Leonie Agnew is a big seller and award-winner in New Zealand. The book won the Storylines Tom Fitzgibbon Award for a first-time children's author of an unpublished manuscript. The perfect read for children aged 9-11, boys in particular, and a good one for reluctant readers.

Larrikin Lane is a new title in the *Mates* series. It's a very funny story about a goat, a sheep and a cranky neighbour with a perfect garden. Suitable for Lower to Mid Primary.

Happy reading.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

YOKO'S DIARY – *Paul Ham*

LINA'S MANY LIVES (OUR AUSTRALIAN GIRL 2) – *Sally Rippin*

THE AMAZING SPENCER GRAY
– *Deb Fitzpatrick*

FINDING SERENDIPITY
– *Angelica Banks*

VERITY SPARKS, LOST AND FOUND
– *Susan Greene*

THE CRYPTIC CASEBOOK OF COCO CARLOMAGNO
– *Ursula Dubosarsky and Terry Denton*

THE PIRATE COMPANY: ON THE TRAIL OF THE GOLDEN TOUCAN
– *Sue Cason*

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SONG FOR A SCARLET RUNNER

JULIE HUNT

Peat and her sister Marlie are cattle herders and live a lonely life outside their village. In one direction lies the Badlands, and in the other, there are the marshes. Peat has never known that there were places beyond the marshlands until she helps a lost traveller. But the traveller is carrying a sickness into the village, and soon Peat is blamed for giving him directions. Escaping from the angry mob, she flees to the deadly marshlands. Along the way, she is joined by a small red creature – a scarlet runner she calls the Sleek – who is both a help and hindrance. In the misty marshes, Peat is caught by an old woman called Eadie, a healer and a storyteller. Little does Peat know that Eadie has a plan for her, one that will free Eadie, but will take Peat to the Silver River. There Peat meets Siltboy and his hound Shadow, and together they formulate a way to reverse the bargain that will keep Peat trapped forever.

ISBN: 9781743313589

RRP: \$15.99



TEACHER NOTES

- As students progress through the story, build a personality portrait of key characters. Write the characters' names on a large piece of paper and list their characteristics underneath using examples from the text. After completing the story, ask students to work individually to say whether each of these characters is good or evil and to give reasons for their choice. When completed, see if everyone agrees and encourage a whole class discussion around why some characters, especially Eadie, are difficult to label.
- Turn to the chapter 'The Welcoming'. Have students choose one marsh auntie and either draw a picture of that character or give a short presentation to the class where they 'become' that character, explaining their special skill and why they would like Peat as their swamp waif.
- Read the chapter 'The Three Sisters'. In a whole group discussion, ask students to come up with ideas about how this story within a story might relate to Peat and the Sleek.
- Consider the significance of Eadie's advice to Peat: 'Always open and close your stories. If you don't, the characters can come out into the world.'
- Discuss with students the concept of different viewpoints. After reading Mother Moss' explanation to Peat about why Eadie bargained with the Stiltman (p 286), have students write a letter from Eadie to Peat explaining her reasons and how she feels about what she has done.
- Genre discussion: ask students what other stories they have read/seen on film/TV or heard that feature elements from the novel. Some elements to start discussion are: time travel, crossing between worlds, stories taking over other stories, traditional legends, epic journeys. Compile a list of these sources and encourage children to search out the best examples.

RUNAWAYS

SHERRYL CLARK

Cassie and her brother Jack are on the run from the past, from the future and from their failure of a family. But where can they go? And can you ever really run away? Runaways tackles many difficult issues facing a huge number of young people today: absent and unresponsive parents, behavioural issues such as ADHD, family units that are falling apart, divided loyalties and desperate situations. This is a brilliant springboard for conversations about choices, empowerment, family, identity, love and difference, and will have appeal and relevance to young people of both genders.

ISBN: 9780143307150

RRP: \$14.99



TEACHER NOTES

- What sort of relationship do Cassie and Jack have? Is this a 'normal' sibling relationship? Why might they be so close?
- Consider Jack's first entry (p 4). How does the structure of this text indicate that Jack is different? What behaviours does he reveal that might support this interpretation?
- Why does Jack decide to run away? Did he have any options? What would have happened to Jack if he had stayed in Perth or with his father?
- In running away, Jack places himself in a very dangerous situation. Whose fault is this? What might this suggest about Jack's previous irresponsible behaviour? How does Jack's journey contradict his mother's belief that he is stupid?
- What truths does Grandad make Della face about her own behaviour (p 68)? How does she react when Cassie tells her she wants her to love Jack?
- Della tells her father 'it just got too hard' (p 69). Is this an acceptable attitude for a parent?
- How do the children react when Grandad asks 'what are we going to do?' (p 69). Why?
- A verse novel relies on the reader to fill in many gaps with their own knowledge of the world. In this way, the author does not need to describe or explain everything. From your own knowledge of the world, what have you been able to infer about each of the characters that the author does not actually tell you?
- The story is told through the eyes of Cassie and Jack. Why might the adult voices or perspectives have been silenced? How does this position help the reader to view the characters? How might this story be different if told through the eyes of one of the adults?
- Choose a passage that you found particularly effective or that you responded to strongly. How did the novel position you as a reader? (How did you react? Which characters did you sympathise with, dislike, etc.) What words or images made you react in this way?

SCIS

Don't forget that all ASO selections have been allocated SCIS numbers. These can be found on our website: www.australianstandingorders.com.au

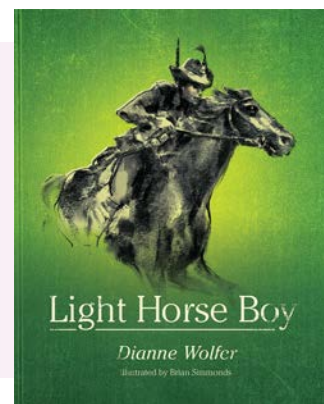
LIGHT HORSE BOY

DIANNE WOLFER AND BRIAN SIMMONDS (Illustrator)

In 1914, Jim and Charlie abandon the Australian outback for the excitement and adventure of the 'war to end all wars'. They sign up for the Light Horse Regiment and sail to Egypt in a fleet of 38 troopships carrying 30,000 soldiers and over 7000 horses. But Jim and Charlie soon discover the brutal realities of life on the front line. *Light Horse Boy* explores WW1 through the eyes of a gentle young man who loves horses. The story is told via text and letters, interspersed with charcoal sketches by Brian Simmonds, primary source documents and historical photographs.

ISBN: 9781922089137

RRP: \$26.99



TEACHER NOTES

- As a class, or in small groups, consolidate your knowledge of WW1. You might like to do this as a simple list or table, or using a graphic organiser such as a mind map.
- Explore the Australian War Memorial website, in particular the section on the WW1 (<http://www.awm.gov.au>).
- Jim and his friends name their joey mascot 'Rufus'. What is the joke in this name? (Hint: Jim suggests Alice say the name aloud.) Why do you think that mascots like Rufus the joey and Billy the rooster were so important to the troops?
- The author had great trouble deciding between the dozens of fantastic images of mascots. Follow these links and choose a favourite:
<http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P05006.007>
<http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P07771.001>
<http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P04447.006>
<http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/304910/>
<http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/H15733/>
Write a short story from the point of view of one of these mascots.
- The story alternates between third person narration and first person letters between Jim and his sister Alice. Why do you think the author has included all these points of view? What would be the story's impact if it were told only in the third person? What would be its impact if we had

only Jim's letters? Or only Alice's replies?

- The book has a strong visual component that includes charcoal illustrations, black-and-white photographs, envelopes, telegrams and letters. Why do you think the book's creators chose to do this? What effect does the book's design have on the reader?
- How do you think the soldiers' injuries affected them after the war? Were all injuries physical? How might mental and psychological war injuries affect people in the long term? You may like to read more about shell shock (and its modern superseder, post-traumatic stress disorder).
- Write a letter from a much older Jim to his 17-year-old self. What advice would he give to himself? Do you think that he would tell him not to go at all?
- Throughout the story, and in the author's prefatory notes, several references are made to Sandy, Major General Bridges' horse. Why do you think this horse was so special? What did it symbolise to the soldiers and people at home?
- Helpful Teacher Links:
<http://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/horses/sandy.asp>
<http://maribyrrong-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/australias-last-warhorse-to-have-maribyrrong-memorial/>

NELL'S FESTIVAL OF CRISP WINTER GLORIES

GLENDA MILLARD AND STEPHEN MICHAEL KING (Illustrator)

Perry Angel has heard many of Nell's stories about the dances she loved in her youth, and how much she particularly loved dancing with her beloved Johnny Silk. In this final instalment in the Kingdom of Silk series, Perry resolves to organise a dance so that Nell can dance with Jenkins, now that her husband Johnny is long gone. The Silks and the Cameron's Creek community love the idea, and plans soon expand into a festival encompassing the dance. But an accident challenges that dream, and the Silks hold grave fears for Nell's future.

ISBN: 9780733329845

RRP: \$14.99



TEACHER NOTES

- Each of the books in the series celebrates the joy of the imagination. Discuss imagination with your students. Encourage them to talk about their favourite 'imaginings'. Have them write a brief description of something they've imagined or dreamed which was particularly memorable for them. They might then like to draw it as well.
- A strong message in this series is that families are born and also made. Discuss with students the many ways families are made (with sensitivity regarding individual students' situations).
- Grief hangs over this series as much as love does. For just as love unites us, so does grief. Everyone in the Silk family has had sadness or loss to recover from. Discuss grief and how it is overcome. (This discussion also requires sensitivity, as students may have experienced recent loss or bereavement.)
- Mr Kadri's and Anik's families are from another country and have migrated to this one. Discuss the challenges involved in resettling, such as learning a new language,

understanding local customs, adapting to a new system of education, finding work.

- 'On the way home, Nell decided she was going to start writing all her rememberings into a book, just in case she ever forgot them' (p 53). Does writing something down help you to treasure your memories? Encourage students to write their own 'Memory Books'.
- Throughout this series, food has been symbolic of memories. Encourage your students to write down a favourite recipe and why it means so much to them. Discuss how place, time, and the people we are with can influence how we feel about a particular food. Discuss the significance of certain foods in various cultures. Create a Class Recipe Book of everyone's favourite recipes, including each personal note, illustrated by each student, and then copy it to share.
- Festivals are celebrations of communities. What would you have at a local festival if you were organising one?

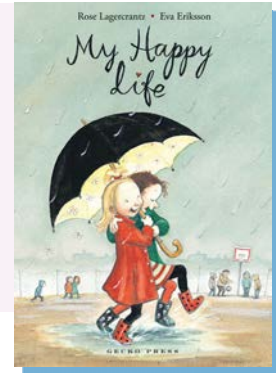
MY HAPPY LIFE

ROSE LAGERCRANTZ AND EVA ERIKSSON (Illustrator)

Dani is probably the happiest person she knows. She is especially happy because she is going to start school, something she has been waiting her whole life for. Then things get even better – she meets Ella Frida by the swings. But then something happens that Dani isn't prepared for and suddenly she is very, very sad. But with the help of her Dad, a couple of hamsters, a bookmark and some letters, Dani overcomes the bad times and can go on living her happy life once more.

ISBN: 9781877467806

RRP: \$15.99



TEACHER NOTES

- Before reading, think and talk about times when you have felt either happy or sad. What was the cause?
- Can you remember your first day of school? Choose one of your first memories. Write and illustrate a descriptive paragraph or poem about it.
- Write a description and draw an illustration of one of your friends. Then write a short story about something you have done together which made you happy.
- Dani writes a book called My Happy Life (p 107). Write your own version of the book. Include your top five happiest moments.
- Design and make a friendship necklace and/or an angel bookmark.
- Alongside happiness, which other emotions can you find in the book? When you find an emotion in the book, examine the illustrations that accompany it. How has the illustrator interpreted the feeling in the illustration?
- What attracts your attention to a particular picture? What kind of lines and textures are used? Do the pictures go beyond what the story tells you?

SUPER FINN

LEONIE AGNEW

Finn is always getting into trouble and doing silly things. His teachers cut him a bit of slack because his father left, but now he is so far behind in his schoolwork that he may have to repeat the year. He has one final chance to prove himself – a project about what he'd like to be when he gets older. Finn decides that he would like to be a superhero. When Finn's mother announces that the family can no longer afford to sponsor their World Vision child, Finn decides that as a superhero it is his responsibility to take over the payments. He doesn't have any money, but he does have great ideas. Finn and his best friend Brain come up with ways to earn lots of money, but their schemes begin to unravel. Now it looks like Finn may have to go to a different school altogether!

ISBN: 9781869439996

RRP: \$14.99



TEACHER NOTES

- Have you ever been bullied by someone? How did this make you feel? What is the best way to deal with a bully?
- What impression do you get about Finn and Seymour's father? In what ways has his leaving affected the family? What difficulties has it created for Finn's mum? How does Finn feel about being likened to his father?
- Think up five adrenalin experiments of your own.
- Is it fair that Finn gets into trouble for the adrenaline experiments? Justify your answer.
- If you were in Finn's position and had to raise money, what would you do?
- Finn's mother tells him that 'it's not what you are; it's what you do that counts'. Do you agree with this? Why/why not?
- Identify the main message or idea in the story. How is this developed by the author? How could this idea help you in your own life?
- Explain how the character of Finn develops and changes as the story progresses. What lessons do you think he learns from his experiences?
- Identify the climax of the story. Why is this event important?

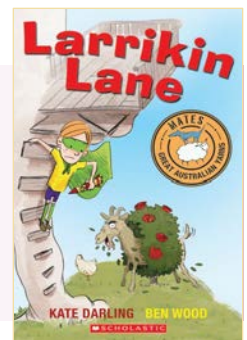
LARRIKIN LANE (MATES)

KATE DARLING AND BEN WOOD (Illustrator)

On Larrikin Lane, there's a crazy-eyed goat who is considered one of the family. But when Delilah eats Mr Meyer's best roses, the neighbour calls her a menace and declares she must go! Then Mr Meyer winds up in hospital and only Delilah and Lola can stop his perfect garden from growing wild.

ISBN: 9781862919891

RRP: \$11.99



TEACHER NOTES

- What is the message/moral of the story?
- How are Arkie and her family good neighbours to Mr Meyer? Why do you think Mr Meyer changes his mind about the goat?
- Find out what the reference to a black sheep means.
- Compose a speech about the importance of neighbours.
- Where do you think the story might be set? Can you tell from the words and illustrations?
- Hold a mock-debate where you argue the pros and cons of having farm animals in the city.
- Establish a class veggie garden, like the family's garden in the story. As a class, devise a schedule for tending the patch. For advice on getting started visit: <http://nrmeducation.net.au/uploads/Sustainability%20Themes/Food/School%20food%20gardens%20fact%20sheet.pdf>
- The author dedicates this story to Vu Ho and his pet sheep, Baa. Vu Ho is a real person who is involved in a dispute with his local council over his pet sheep. A Google search will find information about this.
- Research the origin of 'larrikin'. When was it coined? Write your own definition.